

Facts for Consumers

Rebuilding Your Home After a Disaster: Energy-Saving Ideas



Federal Trade Commission	Toll-free 1-877-FTC-HELP
www.ftc.gov	For the Consumer

*Produced in cooperation with the
National Association of Attorneys General*

If you are rebuilding your home after a local disaster, such as a hurricane, flood, earthquake, or fire, you may want to incorporate energy-saving features. These could include insulation and energy-efficient appliances, windows, doors, and light bulbs.

Energy-efficient features can save you money over time. That's because you pay less for energy costs year after year. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) requires many products to include energy information. You'll find this information right on the product or package. This brochure will explain what to look for to make the best energy and money-saving choices.

Home Insulation: Look for the R-Value

Insulating your home can dramatically cut down on home heating and cooling costs. When you shop for insulation, always look for the "R-value." The higher the R-value, the better the insulating power. R-value measures insulating power. Thicker insulation does not necessarily mean higher R-value.

To find the R-value you need, check with your local utility company. Recommended levels vary depending on where you live. Remember: if you install more insulation than necessary, you'll waste money. If home contractors install your insulation, be sure to discuss what R-value is best for your home.

Ask retailers and home installers for a fact sheet on insulation before buying. This fact sheet, required by the Federal Trade Commission, tells you the type of insulation, its R-value, and the area it will cover.

If home contractors install your insulation, they must give you a contract or receipt showing the insulation's R-value, coverage area, and thickness. If loose-fill insulation is installed, the number of bags used also must be included.

Energy-Efficient Appliances: Look for the Yellow EnergyGuides

If you want to buy energy-efficient major appliances, look for the bright yellow "EnergyGuide" labels on each model. These labels can help you select an appliance that uses less energy and costs less to run than other similar models.

The EnergyGuide sticker appears on refrigerators, refrigerator-freezers, freezers, dishwashers, clothes washers, water heaters, furnaces, heat pumps, and air conditioners.

The EnergyGuides help you select energy-efficient models. Some EnergyGuides show you how much energy a particular appliance uses compared with models of a similar size. The model using less energy will cost you less to operate. Other EnergyGuides measure energy efficiency compared with similarly-sized models. The most energy-efficient model will cost less to operate.

Many of the EnergyGuides also show the estimated yearly operating cost of a particular appliance. You can compare this figure with similar models to find one that costs less to use.

Windows: Look for the U-Value

You may want to rebuild your home with energy-saving window products. These include all types of windows, doors with windows, and skylights.

To find the most energy-efficient window product, look for the U-value. The lower the U-value, the more energy-efficient the product is.

U-value measures how well heat is conducted through a window. For assurance that the U-value is calculated correctly, look for an “NFRC” label. This represents the National Fenestration Rating Council, which is the industry group that sets standards for U-value measurements.

If home contractors install your windows, be sure to discuss what U-value is best for your home.

Lamps and Light Bulbs: Look for the Light Output

You can save money over the long run by buying energy-efficient light bulbs. But shop for “light output,” not watts.

Light output (lumens) is basically the amount of light a bulb produces. Watts measure the amount of energy used.

You may be used to buying light bulbs by looking for watts (e.g., “75” or “100” watts). But different watt bulbs can produce the same amount of light. If you buy a lower watt bulb that provides the same amount of light, you’ll save money in energy costs.

There are several different kinds of bulbs. These include:

- **Incandescent.** These are the standard light bulbs. To save energy costs, find the bulbs with the light output you need, then choose the one with the lowest watts.
- **Compact fluorescent.** Often recommended by utility companies, compact fluorescents can last more than 10 times longer than incandescent bulbs. Though more expensive to buy, compact fluorescents are cheaper to use over the long run than incandescent bulbs. Over the life of the bulb, the lower operating cost offsets the higher initial purchase price. Some utility companies offer money-saving coupons or rebates for these products.

The type of light produced by incandescent and compact fluorescent bulbs differs. You may want to experiment with each to see which works best for you.

- **Incandescent reflector** (flood and spotlights). Select the most energy-efficient flood lamps or spotlights by finding the bulbs with the light output you need, then choose the one with the lowest watts.

When rebuilding or remodeling, remember that some energy-efficient light bulbs (such as compact fluorescent or halogen bulbs) come in different sizes and shapes. In addition, compact fluorescent bulbs cannot be used under all circumstances — for example, they are inappropriate for use in fixtures with dimmers. Therefore, you may need to buy ceiling fixtures or table or floor lamps that are designed specifically to accommodate them.

For More Information

Some companies may try to take advantage of those who are rebuilding their homes after a disaster. If you feel you have been victimized or have other questions, you may want to contact the following for more information.

- **State agencies.** Contact the state Attorney General in your state capital. Most state Attorneys General have authority under state consumer protection statutes to investigate and prosecute unfair or deceptive acts and practices. In addition, you may want to contact your state consumer agency or energy office. You can find these phone numbers and addresses in your telephone directory.
- **The Federal Energy Management Agency (FEMA).** FEMA can provide brochures and other information about rebuilding your home after a disaster. Check your telephone directory for a local FEMA office; write FEMA at: Federal Center Plaza, 500 C Street, SW, Washington, DC, 20472; or call FEMA’s general information number in Washington, DC at 202-646-2500.

- The Federal Trade Commission (FTC). You also may want to contact the FTC. Although the FTC cannot represent you directly in a dispute with a company, it can act when it sees a pattern of possible law violation. Contact the Consumer Response Center by phone: toll-free 1-877-FTC-HELP (382-4357); TDD: 202-326-2502; by mail: Consumer Response Center, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20580; or by email: use the complaint form at **www.ftc.gov**.

To obtain a free copy of the FTC's **Best Sellers**, which lists more than 100 free brochures on many consumer issues, contact the Consumer Response Center by phone: toll-free 1-877-FTC-HELP (382-4357); TDD: 202-326-2502; by mail: Consumer Response Center, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20580; or on the Internet at **www.ftc.gov**.